

REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's thorough consideration of the present application. Claims 6, 12, 13, and 18 are cancelled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claim 3 was previously cancelled. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-11, 14-17, and 19-26 are currently pending in the instant application. Claim 1 is amended. Claims 1, 15, 16, 19 and 23 are independent. Reconsideration of the present application is earnestly solicited.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by incorporating the limitations of objected-to claim 6 into independent claim 1, and by canceling claims 6, 12, 13 and 18. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicant did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Specifically, the Examiner has indicated that claims 2, 14-16, and 19-26 have been allowed.

In addition, the subject matter of claim 6 has also been identified as containing allowable subject matter if rewritten in independent format.

In response, the Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 6. Therefore, independent claim 1 is now in condition for allowance. Claim 6 has been cancelled.

Further, independent claim 12, and dependent claims 13 and 18 have been cancelled.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7-10, 12 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi (U.S. Patent No. 5,940,824) in view of Funamoto et al. (U.S. 5,911,006). Claims 11, 17 and 18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi (U.S. Patent No. 5,940,824) in view of Funamoto et al. and Otto (U.S. 6,244,514). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Amendments to Independent Claim 1

As noted above, but while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 6. Claim 6 has been cancelled.

Accordingly, independent claim 1, and claims 4, 5, 7-11, and 17 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 12, 13, and 18 Cancelled

In addition, independent claim 12, and claims 13 and 18 depending therefrom, have been cancelled.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim rejections are respectfully requested. Moreover, Applicant respectfully submits that the instant application is in condition for allowance.

All claims of the present application are now in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicant(s) respectfully petition(s) for a three (3) month extension of time for filing a reply in connection with the present application, and the required fee of \$1020.00 is attached hereto.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Carl T. Thomsen, Registration No. 50,785 at (703) 208-4030 (direct line) in the Washington, D.C. area.

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Reply to Office Action of June 13, 2006

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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Date: December 12, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 

Marc S. Weiner
Reg. No. 32,181
P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

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